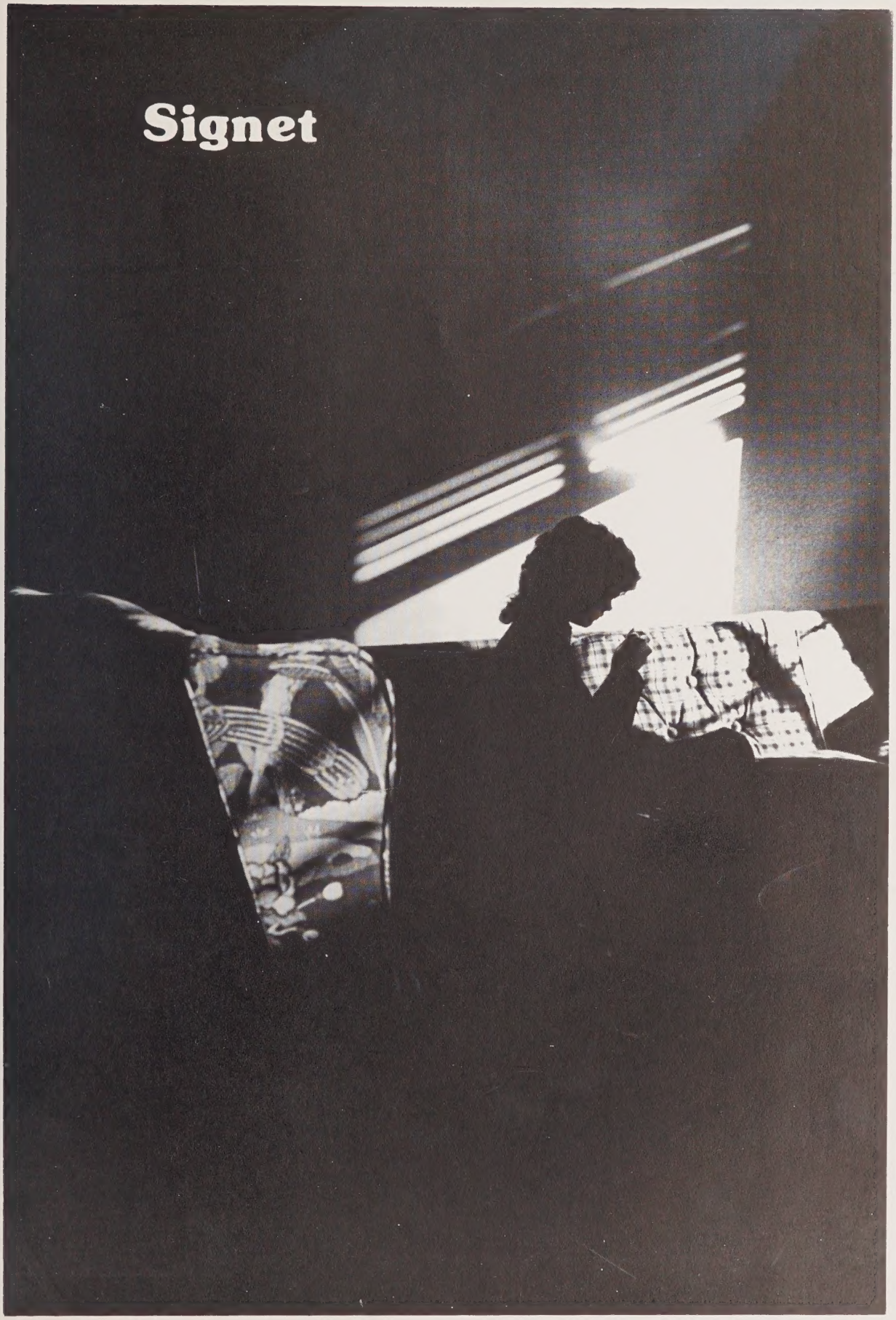
Signet

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2025 with funding from
North Carolina Digital Heritage Center

https://archive.org/details/signet19831983quee

Signet

Queens College
Charlotte, North Carolina
1983

SIGNET STAFF

Mary Nethercutt ..... *Editor*

Cathi Wilkinson ..... *Associate Editor*

Debbie Barnes, Edith Busbee, Allison Christian, Rowena Gregg

Margaret Kelso, Erin Ryan, Carolyn York ..... *Readers*

Rowena Gregg, Beth Peeler, Erin Ryan, Jennifer Smith ..... *Artists*

SIGNET CREATIVE WRITING AWARDS

Poetry

1st Place ..... "Ice Cream Dimes" ..... *Allison Christian*

2nd Place ..... "Birthday Poem," (tie) "Patterns" ..... *Mary Nethercutt*

3rd Place ..... "Sonnet I" ..... *Jennifer Hull*

Short Stories

1st Place ..... "A Perfect Evening" ..... *Margaret Kelso*

2nd Place ..... "Conversion" ..... *Elizabeth Allen*

COVER PHOTO

Rowena Gregg

TABLE of CONTENTS

Ice Cream Dimes — *Allison Christian* 4
Birthday Poem —*Mary Nethercutt* 4
Cat Span — *Esther McGarity* 5
Sonnet I — *Jennifer Hull* 5
Sonnet II — *Jennifer Hull* 5
Statue of a Clown — *Janice Riner* 6
Affair With the Wind — *Mary Lou Waterstradt* 6
Wisteria — *Ann Matthews* 6
Fantasy V — *Ann Matthews* 8
Columns in the Wind — *Mary Lou Waterstradt* 8
The Student — *Pat Baker* 8
October is for Aching — *Ann Matthews* 9
Untitled — *Karen Styron* 9
Shirley — *Allison Christian* 9
Overdose — *Mary Nethercutt* 10
Nighmare — *Lesa Christmas* 10
Reflections — *Laura C. Cox* 12
Untitled — *Cathi Wilkinson* 12
Patterns — *Mary Nethercutt* 12
A Perfect Evening —*Margaret Kelso* 13
Prelude: Verse — *Mary Nethercutt* 14
Third Class Ticket — *Mary Nethercutt* 16
And One Last Thing —*Allison Christian* 16
A Thought About Love —*Neil Ray* 16
Ode Two —*Mary Nethercutt* 17
Cressida at Morning —*Erin Ryan* 17
Conversion — *Elizabeth Allen* 18
Dining Hall Syndrome — *Erin Ryan* 20
Shopping — *Mary Lou Waterstradt* 20
The Clothes Basket — *Margaret Kelso* 21

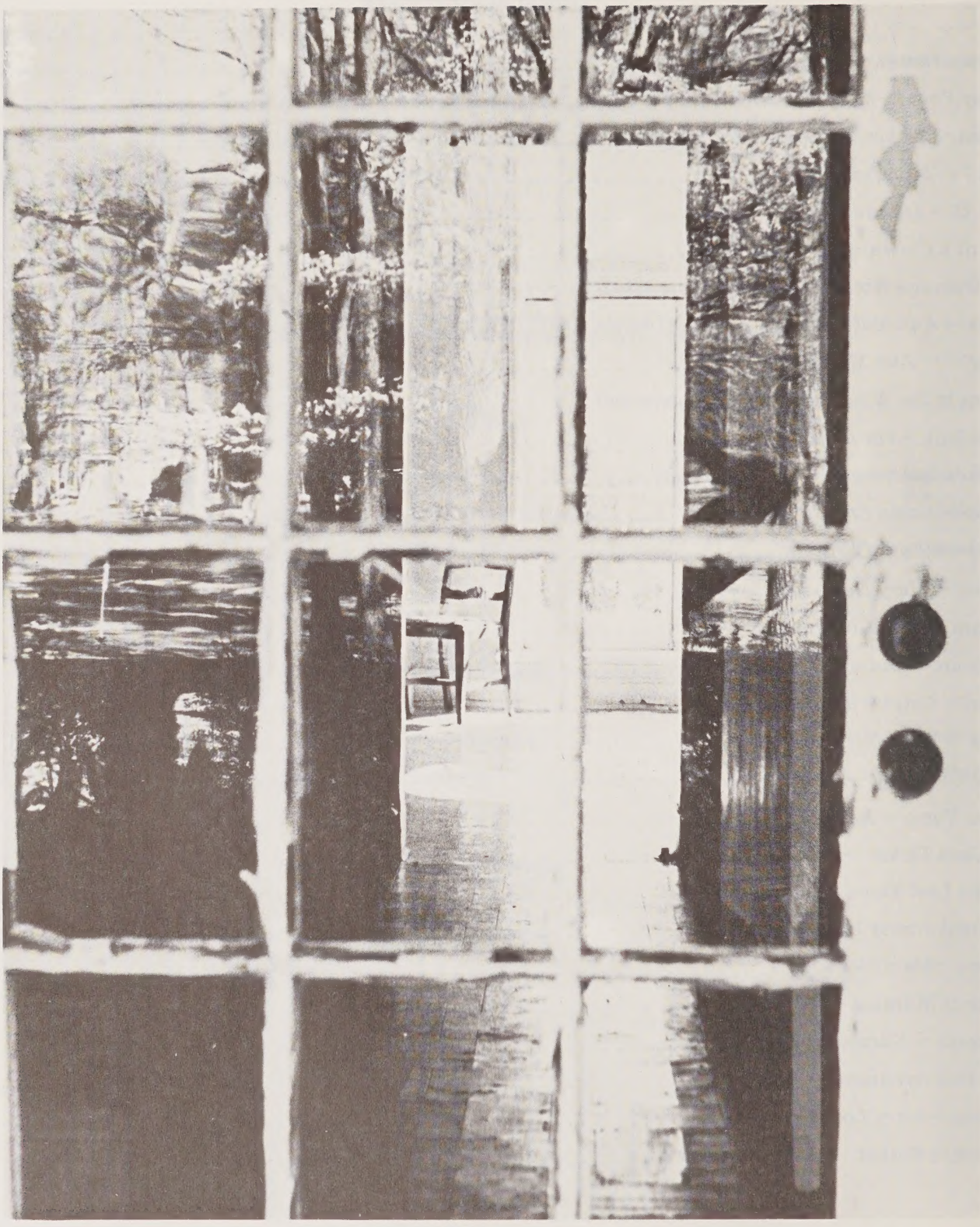

Photo By JENNIFER SMITH

ICE CREAM DIMES

The ice cream dimes are bitter
In my mouth.
My feet are hitting quick and hard
Upon the chalky dust.
Too late again.
Too late for the ice cream man.
Why don't you ever tell me when it's time?
I tear my feet up running,
Stab my side with these small pounding feet.
Is that the bell there?
You never open your red smile-lips to say
"It's time for the ice cream man,
Yes, it's time for the ice cream man . . ."
That clock, that clock won't tell me lies
It has for all the grown-up eyes.

I'm hurting, hurting.
My face is wet with tears and sweat
And a stinging runny nose
Half-dried and burned by the sun.

You smiled all covered with cow-pie dirt.
Oh, Daddy says it is!
You smiled and weeded your garden
And threw away the weeds
With the white fuzz tops.
You threw them away
After I asked you
To save them for me.
But I stuck my dimes in my mouth
And didn't hear you tell me
"Spit them out."
I ran anyway, forgetting you.
I know you won't run after me,
Wild down the street,
Alerting the neighbors to the black
On your hands
And the money in my mouth.

Allison Christian

BIRTHDAY POEM

In just eight
    all too short months,
We'll make our audition
    in the real world.
Well,
    just between you and me,
    I'm still a brat
    and you still like a good hug.
If we couldn't hold on
    to the child
that makes everyday new
and every night an adventure,
we wouldn't know each other.
Four years ago young,
    look how far we've grown.
Well,
    just between you and me.
I'm glad we shared our yesterdays.
And when the tomorrows
    we've dreamed about
    finally get here,
I hope we can still smile at each other,
    even if it's cross-country
    (like the Bell commercial).
I'll give you a little hint,
I think,
    that in eight months,
the world's in for a hell of a show.
And by the way,
    I'm glad we're in it together.

Mary Nethercutt

CAT SPAN

My life has been one big encounter with a cat.
When I was an infant, I heard its rhythmic,
Pulsating purrs and could relax
Knowing I was not alone.

When I was a child, I held it close in my arms
And it responded by holding onto me,
Sometimes licking my face and hands along with its own,
'Til the day came when my parents said,
"You are old enough to take full responsibility
For your cat."

Over the next four decades, numerous games were played:
Mostly ball games -- some soft, some hard --
Nearly always according to the rules.
Our scores seesawed; I won a few and lost a few,
But so did he. Other games were
Now-you-see-me,-now-you-don't, and
Catch-me-if-you-can.
I searched and chased, many times to no avail,
But on occasion found a fortune or pounced upon a prize.

Now that I'm old, I find myself buffeted about.
Today I may be dealt a quick left
Or a hard right paw,
Tomorrow I may feel his whole weight
Upon my chest;
Then, as suddenly and unexpectedly,
I'm free of both for as long as it takes to recover --
Only to find myself once again
The mouse in a cat-and-mouse game.

Esther McGarity

SONNET I

By chance, I looked up to the sky in time
to see a star shoot halfway 'cross the dark
and disappear into the night, its climb
Well-marked by one slow-fading trail of sparks.
I watched that one audacious pinpoint dare
defy a silent, dimly-flickering sky
and slash across its middle, happy flare,
illuminating as its life passed by.
Surprised, I stood and waited, hoping for
another bright, inspiring display
to thrill my soul; but there was none in store.
The star had told me all it had to say.

No need to die a slow death in the dawn:
Be brief, be bright, be true, and then be gone.

Jennifer Hull

SONNET II

Insurgent waters wrestle with the shore
as fiercely foaming crests descend to smash
against the dunes, whose soft defense is poor.
Relentlessly the green-gray walls collapse.
The sand is all submission as it slides
in chunks and blocks into the cauldron's edge
and, ravished by the bold torrential tides,
succumbs, too weak to bear the sacrilege.
And every grain that once supplied the dunes
is sifting downward to the silent bed
that holds the mad creator of their ruins,
still thrashing at the boundaries overhead.

The knowledge that there can be no release
reflects in one's hate and the other's peace.

Jennifer Hull

WISTERIA

Shoot-young and tender,
trailing tendrils of May,
reaching for any branch to render
support, the strength to bear
growth agony, growth joy
until it climbs another day
of blue skies' stair,

The vine prospers and sends
out greening messages
that it intends to hug the ends
of universe. No pruning hook,
pelting hail or hungry snail
its purpose brook.

Old, tough, tenacious,
buried deep in earth,
age-yellowed, gnarled, sagacious,
unyielding as death,
lies wisteria's reason - roots
to send new shoots.

Ann Matthews

"STATUE OF A CLOWN"

Garbed in motley fashion -
apricot, mauve, ice blue, dove grey, seafoam green -
Painted like a misty rainbow,
The petite porcelain clown
Has a gentlemanly charm
Though dressed in baggy clothing
That no gentleman's tailor created!
As he adorns my dressing table-top,
His affable, laughable vitality
Is evident to me
As I look and see how his impish grinning mouth,
Dimpled, and framed by candy-apple cheeks and nose,
Garnsihes his hummingbird egg face
With a delicious strawberry taste.
Poppy-seed eyes are redolent with
An aroma of spicey mischief.
As his piccolo voice says,
"Watch me, I can ride my unicycle
With my painted pointed feet!"
His procelain skin feels smooth,
As I hold him in my hand,
Wondering what tricks the little chap
Holds in his feisty fists.
A smudge of black hair
Springs from his bald head -
Oh! I just noticed his red suspenders,
Keep his trousers from falling down.
Such a jolly little fellow!
A friend to one and all -
He always makes me laugh.

Janice Riner

AFFAIR WITH THE WIND

Stopping long enough to remove her shoes
And daringly unbutton her blouse,
She ran into the sun-drenched meadow.
Standing silently and expectantly tense,
She listened to the silence around her
And breathed deeply, not smelling the first spring flowers.
Then he came.
He came from the south, warmed by the coastal sun.
He brought with him the sea spray,
The birds' songs and the flowers' perfumes.
She laughted as he lifted her long, full skirts playfully
And tore her auburn hair from its pins
To run his fingers through the airy locks.
He chased her wantonly throughly the field
Until she fell into the clover and let him love her.
She then spoke to him passionately saying:
"Oh, my love! You have returned to me!
I have longed for your loving touch.
All winter long I have waited for you.
I shall always wait through the winter for you
And shall always be your playful mistress.
Oh, who would believe
That I am having
An affair with the wind!"

Mary Lou Waterstradt

Photo By ERIN RYAN

COLUMNS IN THE WOOD

Amidst the verdant green overgrowth
The charred yet glorious columns rise
Defying storm and fire
To prove their dignity.
Marble steps rise above a crumbling foundation
To show that there remains only a grassy pit
Where a polished floor had been.

How many feet did tread that floor?
How many joyful steps were danced upon it?
Were daughters wooed and won
In the parlors of this stately mansion?
Did young men there
Vow to defend their sister's honor?
How many breathed this fragrant air with their first breath —
How many carried it to their grave —
Before the destroyers came here?
Why needed they to burn this place
Whose very essence was beauty?
What causes man to hate so much
That he need destroy both beauty and innocence?

But hush! listen carefully
And hear the laughter ringing in the air —
The laughter of children at play.
Can you see, there, by the oak tree,
The young mother teaching her first born to walk?
And yet there — the sister blushing after having given her first kiss,
And the young man, pleased at having taken it?

My mind is playing tricks upon me —
It is but the wind in the trees
And the shadows on the grass
Which make these scenes of happiness and beauty.

Stay a moment longer, wind, and laugh for me;
Play your scenes once more for me, shadows,
That I may know happiness.
For these memories you bring,
The past which you recall
Hold the true beauty of this world.

Mary Lou Waterstradt

THE STUDENT

I am gathering nuts for the winter,
Scurrying, hurrying,
Packing them in,
Acorns and nuggets of knowledge,
Of learning,
Found on and under the tree.

Balance is tricky,
The branches are spaced
So that I risk
When I leap,
But always above me the acorns are plenty
Just slightly out of my reach.

Pat Baker

FANTASY V

To escape a southern summer,
I dream an Irish moor
Where I walk ankle deep
In charismatic clover,
Green sedge, in the rain.

I traverse a flat saucer
Under an inverted cup
Of luminous gray, rimmed
Milky white. In the near distance,
I hear a sussurus, the sea.

Like a wet sheet for fever,
My clothes cling cool.
Rain-tipped lashes, rainbow prisms
Make me flush a covey of quail
Whose drumming, thundering swirl
My heartbeat echoes, awestruck
At the cease from silence,
At the need for laughter.

Ann Matthews

My whole being is black with inner fear
grandma —
My eyes are red from crying
so is my nose from frequent wipings,
my hands are moist with sweat —
wringing wet.
My stomach revulses from the stench —
please wake up —
take care of your princess.
My heart is full of yellow disease —
the aching of cancerous longing.
My mind is playing diplomat between
two concrete thoughts in the third
world war of my head — why did you leave?
Finally the white flag is thrown up in
surrender.

My whole being is black with inner fear
grandma —
Please step out of your silk wrappings and sit
beside me the way you used to when we were the only
two who were snapping green beans in the warm
yellow sunshine —

Karen Styron

OCTOBER IS FOR ACHING

October is for aching.
Homesick, nostalgic for I know not what,
I am stabbed
With hickory yellow, oak vermillion,
Shamed by a sky of accusing blue.

October is for crushing
Acorns under heel, for guilt.
"We have left undone
Those things which we ought to have done."
But isn't it too late, Lord?
Spring's the time for prayers.

October is for burning
Leaves, bridges, beauty like a wound
Into my soul, welcome hurt,
Healed only by November.

Ann Matthews

OVERDOSE

To condense —
throw away all the
unnecessary words.
Whispers barely breathed
are heard much stronger.
It's moments you remember —
not years,
spilled out over too much time.
Emotion is dangerous,
an overdose can kill.

Mary Nethercutt

SHIRLEY

Shirley, you were much too young to die
And your mother still mourns
That her little girl is gone.
What will the old lady do?
Her wild rose bushes
Take care of themselves
And there is no bleach
Upon her kitchen shelves
That can wash away like berry stains
The purple nailprints on her hands.
Indeed, what are those marks,
Except from fists, long clenched tight,
And forty-four years fighting crib-death.
Mother Mary would understand.
And still you slipped away in sleep.

Allison Christian

NIGHTMARES

A sudden flash of a bright shooting star raced across the velvety blackness and steamed through the atmosphere. The moon was a shining beacon and its silver light shimmered across the backyard. There was silence, and with the sound of silence came the noise of dark things, slinking their way along, unhurriedly, knowing they would get what they wanted. The fear they caused was noisless, stealthy, silent. They moved to their prey, confidently assured it would be waiting - and waiting it was, enclosed within itself, wise and knowing. It had happened before. Time and again the monster lurked, awaiting its chance -- and it always came.

Inside a space no bigger than a human hand, it creeped and made its way through the maze inside, always finding that it wanted. Nightlights never kept it away and it never minded two or three extra blankets. The monster never knew they were there. Its domain was the mind and it never needed enter, because there it stays. In the light, it hid, cowed by bigger things like schoolwork and friends and what games to play, but at night, it was at home. When the other things were gone and there was only dusk, it stood on familiar ground, growing in size until the other things were small and insignificant and the monster dominated all. It told stories, gory and bloody, it murdered and killed -- sometimes so realistically, its presence could be felt -- but it never cared, never stopped until a flickering light sent a message. Therefore with the light -- it ceased -- never waiting, usually in the middle of its rounds -- it ceased. Then it was gone, a coward to the illumination of day, disappearing into the depths and returning only with dusk.

Lesa Christmas

Photo By ERIN RYAN

As I sit
by the lucid window
the reflections remind me of . . .
you trying to be something you're not;
Always being carefree.
Those worries never pile up,
your system is always squeaky clean —
like this window.
I can see through you —
your thoughts,
your lies,
your language of life,
means null to me,
Even though I still care.
The sun out of this window peeks through at me —
it laughs, like you, at me.
But the acting is so poor
He runs behind the curtains.
Those curtains are too white and soft to hide
forever.
The act is worse than ever
ONCE I can anticipate
the shine.

Cathi Wilkinson

REFLECTIONS

You sit, and stare and wonder why.
Perhaps a tear slides down your cheek.
In that tear is a reflection.
A glimpse of someone you once knew,
Of some special place you once shared.
Of time, that has faded away.

Laura Cox

PATTERNS

The cool light
broke across the window pane,
sending shattering brightness
scattering across the pillows.
the morning light
chased your smile
and caught it,
captured it,
framed it,
illuminating your face.
Lazily stretching,
basking in the warmth of new day;
reveling in the warmth of past nights,
Like lightning before the strike
you turned that smile on me,
and once again,
I was blinded.
The jagged edges of light
now fade into shadow.
Patterned daggers to
rip away all traces
of the smile that once illumined me.
Shadows grow
to blot away
the now stale light of day.
Darkness takes a final stab.
All traces of you now die
with the fading light.

Mary Nethercutt

A PERFECT EVENING

Streaks of cobalt and crimson clashed over the horizon. "You look beautiful tonight," Dan said, kissing Allison on the neck and breathing her musky perfume. "I don't imagine you can carry a concealed weapon in that outfit." He examined the strapless black silk evening gown that clung to her body as if he were searching for her service revolver. "Or, are you hiding it in your purse?"

Her face puckered in a little-girl expression, one of her mannerisms that he found endearing. She looked soft and glowing tonight, and something else. Vulnerable. He felt the urge to wrap his arms around her to protect her from the world. But he realized that if any sinister force might threaten her, it would be she who would lay the assailant shattered and breathless on the floor. He would only be a bystander.

"Tonight you can pretend that I'm not a lady cop," she said, handing him her black lace shawl. He liked to do "gentlemanly" things for her like open doors and assist with coats. It was hard for her after a day of proving that she wasn't helpless. As he gently draped the silver shawl over her shoulders, he let his fingers trail down her arms and she felt the response of her body. She could smell the tangy French aftershave he saved for special occasions. She loved his tenderness, his romantic little touches like a bouquet of white daisies and loveletters in the mail. If she told him tonight what she had been practicing in her mind all day, she did not know how he would react. He might even cry.

Daniel Lovelace's full, neatly trimmed beard, streaked with grey and auburn, did not match his brown hair, that was a bit too long to be fashionable. He tossed a pile of philosophy books onto the back seat so that Allison could get in. He hesitated long enough to appreciate the full view of her exposed leg before he went to his side and slipped in behind the wheel. A red terry cloth cover attempted to hide the ripped plaid vinyl seats of the 1970 vintage Ford Falcon whose biggest assets were a black fur dashboard and wheel-well lights that a former owner had labeled "sharp." Daniel claimed his car has "flash" and enjoyed the mixed responses he got from other people.

Daniel patted his pocket before adjusting himself in his seat. It was still there. Then he looked over at Allison. "Tough day?" he asked.

"Does it show?" Allison answered.

"A little" He patted her knee. "Just lay back and relax. We're going to have a perfect evening."

Allison was sure they wouldn't.

Allison Dresden was no connoisseur of wines although she could distinguish a good Bordeaux from Gallo red, but she gave appropriate compliments to Daniel's after-dinner splurge, a fine French burgundy. She appreciated good things but they were not a studied art with her.

"Dan," Allison began just as Daniel started to speak. They both stopped abruptly and laughed then Daniel insisted she go first.

"I want to talk to you," she said, shifting her gaze to his gold cufflinks. "It's serious. Should we go some place more private?"

He looked around the tiny dark restaurant. The tables were widely spaced over the dark maroon carpet and soft baroque music screened any ambient conversation. He had chosen the location with care -- a place with style that would provide a suitable mileau for his own serious after-dinner conversation. "I think this place is very nice, don't you?" he said.

She glanced around without absorbing any information and nodded. He was impossible, really. How much money had he splurged tonight? And she would have rather seen it go towards a new suit or even just a sports coat that would replace those corduroy atrocities with frayed collars and cuffs. He'd rather spend his salary on a new classical record or some antique book than find a decent apartment where he wouldn't bump his head on a pipe every time he walked through the hall to the bathroom.

She didn't mind very much that he was a CO and they both agreed that Vietnam was a mistake, but she was uncomfortable about his draft counseling at the University where he taught. He was advising young men not to register for the draft. They had fought bitterly over that issue -- he pulling out wordy philosophical issues and a long data sheet of precedents and she, initiating a cease-fire by simply stating: "It's illegal. It's against the law."

(A Perfect Evening - cont'd.)

She could even stand his little jokes and snide comments about her police work. Lady Blue, he would call her. She was already toughened to that type of banter but what bothered her most was that she could hurt him so easily. Hurt him just by being what she was.

"Dessert, sir?" the waiter asked.

"Yes," Daniel answered without consulting her. "We'll both have the chocolate mousse."

Daniel wondered what Allison wanted to talk about. Perhaps it was the same topic he wanted to discuss. Maybe she had decided that she was ready to commit herself. He was waiting for the right moment to slip the family treasure out of his pocket and onto her finger. It was a brilliant diamond surrounded by tiny rubies. It would look lovely on her slender white hand.

But first there would be the confrontation. He was aware of how much she had sacrificed and struggled for her career. Wasn't he a staunch supporter of women's rights? He respected her, even if she was a police officer. But it was just not possible for the chief draft counsel for the National Conscientious Objectors Society, a charter member of Action to Stop Military Expansion and the secretary of Movement Against Handguns to have a wife that toted a forty-five. Perhaps she could move to a different division. Public relations or something. Or, maybe she would enjoy staying home. Getting pregnant. There would be no shame in her quitting after she had proven herself. But she just had to give up the gun. Already he felt disloyal to his beliefs just knowing it was in his house. She unloaded it whenever she came in, of course, and took it with her when she left, but he hated it so that he never forgot its presence.

He had fought his feelings for her a long while but finally admitted he loved her. Then, that time she had been away for six weeks, part special duty and part vacation, he had realized that his life diminished in her absence. He loved her courage, her energy and her enthusiasm and he wanted to commit himself. Permanently. Only he had kept putting off giving her the ring.

Allison picked at the mousse. How could she tell him that they must break up? That they were just too incompatible? Why, she couldn't even tell him what her day was like. One time she had described a scuffle she had been involved in and he had turned chalk white and demanded that she quit her job. And yet, she loved being with him. Loved hearing his voice sing in the shower and watching him get excited over his abstract theories. She enjoyed coming into his apartment after a long day, seeing the red-checkered tablecloth topped with a candle in an old Perrier bottle, smelling the aroma of spaghetti sauce. Later, when she was sated with lovemaking, that was the most gentle and sensual she had ever known, she would curl up next to his naked body and sleep without nightmares.

Perhaps she could wait for another time to break up with him. She was groggy from wine and the rich dinner and wasn't ready to handle the discussion. It could wait, certainly. You could always choose when to break your own heart.

"What was it you wanted to talk about?" he asked her.

"It can wait," she answered.

She looked tired, he thought. Maybe this wasn't the best time to confront her. Wait until another time when she felt fresh and energetic. The ring would'nt melt. There would be another perfect evening.

"What about you?" she asked. "I thought you had something you wanted to talk about.

"Another time," he answered. "Let's go home."

Margaret Kelso

PRELUDE:

Don't let it be love.
No, I don't even want to like --
too much --
anymore.
The effort
a weight to carry.
burden on the emotions past.

VERSE:

Lock the door,
swallow the key,
can't get near,
can't hurt me.
I know your game
and it's not free,
the rules are made to
break
You see
I've played before
and I'm not blind.
You'll steal my heart
and leave behind
the memories
that hang around,
and hide in corners
weighting down the days
and sneaking out at night . . .
Just when I think
I've got it right,
I'm wrong.
No time to start again.
But then,
I doubt I'll ever win.
It's so much easier to be
just by myself
just here with me.

Mary Nethercutt

Photo By ROWENA GREGG

THIRD CLASS TICKET

I bought the tickets in advance,
looking forward to our time together;
knowing very little about
the direction we were to take.
Fortunes wheel begin to turn —
riding over the premise,
running rampant through
my all too psychologically
human dreams.
Damned pragmatist —
you took the course of events
got ahead through pomp
and with due circumstance
the final end approached.
Hesitating, still weighing my alternatives;
losing my balance,
I was stricken at the sight
of reality.
Ready to get the job done —
move on —
always a master of the artificiality
of the convention.
Taking what was to be a lengthy trip,
you stopped the cause
along with the whole disease.
Falling for the rhetoric of your
upper class intro.
I boarded without bothering
to check my reservation —
and never noticed the signs
that flashed along the way.
The trip was fun while it lasted
but retrospect is hell.
You took me for a first class ride —
on a third class ticket.

Mary Nethercutt

AND ONE LAST THING

No sir, honey,
You ain't so cool.
Your face gets red
And your lips just drool.
Your breathing's heavy,
And your mouth-roof leaks,
Chokes up my throat
Fills my cheeks
And I have to SPIT
Just like I'm in the dentist's chair.
Pains in the head
Usually land me there.
Yeah that's what you are,
No, you ain't cool.
You're just a heavy-breathin',
Chest-aheavin',
Droolin' fool.

Allison Christian

A THOUGHT ABOUT LOVE

I wish that I could love, truly and completely
No confusion on things to say, or things to do.
No hunger strikes and sleepless nights.
Withstanding the pressures, that boil within me.
No making of promises, that could falter in the passing of time,
Or becoming enraged, at the tought that someone else can take my place.
Not stealing, killing or fighting for it.
I just want to lie back, and know it's there.
At least for today.

Neil Ray

ODE TWO

When I need a little hope,
(your vagueness leaves
something to be desired)
there's the sweater
I wore
that afternoon.
I pull it out of the pile
with an appropriate romantic sigh
(I only get away with it
in my mind).
And hold it —
just for a minute.
It makes me feel a little more sure.
My imagination reads reality
into your smile,
remembering the early fall —
your eyes when they're quiet,
the way you carry a crowd.
Maybe you're right —
I am bitter.
But I don't hate all men,
or the dream I make them.
Even if there's no future,
there's my sweater
and it brings me you.

Mary Nethercutt

CRESSIDA AT MORNING

I love to watch the world awaken
through your heavy-lidded eyes
Hold me like a sleepy child
whisper through the night.

Filtered morning sunlight lingers
as a blanket soft as air
while slowly discarded dreams
silently dissapear.

Hands that reach beyond
the fuzzy nocturnal haze
and pull me forward into
the waiting, breaking day.

Arms that pull me closer with
the warm smell of sleep
linen rustles, unfold, and finally dispel
the remainder of the dark
— leaving only the moment
and the awakening of you.

Erin Ryan

Photo By BETH PEELER

When my husband and I married, there were some fairly stringent conditions on the agreement. There were two things I never wanted in my home: an aquarium and a microwave oven. The aquarium is just a personal quirk of mine. I don't like them. Their soft, gurgling sound reminds me of my dentist's office. Looking into a fish's blank eyes, watching the rhythmic fluttering of his gills, makes my skin crawl. The restriction against the microwave oven stemmed from my innate suspicion of all things mechanical. I don't like machines; I don't understand them; I don't want to learn how to work them. I am perfectly happy to drive my car without the faintest inkling of how it works.

Everything progressed along smoothly for the first few months. We were awakened each morning by the dependable Seth Thomas alarm clock with a single button that pulled out on the back. The button was appropriately marked "alarm." Even I could figure out that one. We ate meals prepared on a G. E. stove with a conventional oven that I sprayed once every six months with "Easy Off" to remove charred on splatters.

Gradually, I began to notice that my line of defense against technology was being infiltrated. It all started when my husband gave me an eight track tape deck for Mother's Day. We did not, at that point, have any children. But, it was pleasant to have music filling our tiny apartment, so I ignored his indiscretion. Later, my husband had to go to California on business. He came home with a traveling alarm clock the size of a pin head. It was subsequently lost.

When my husband turned over the bill paying to me, he found it necessary to present me with a counter top calculator. Then he gave me a pocket model to take to the grocery store. It didn't help us save any money on food because I never figured out how to work it. One anniversary, I was the recipient of a Sony Walkman. "You can use it when you rake leaves," he announced proudly. I never use it for the simple reason that one day, while raking, I got so engrossed in the music that I unknowingly backed out into the street and nearly got run over by the "Snow-White Laundry" truck. On my thirty-fifth birthday, he gave me a digital wrist watch that plays twelve tunes. He had already programmed its tiny computer to play Happy Birthday on April twenty-sixth, which is his birthday. He had also fed it our wedding date so it could play the Anniversary Waltz on that day. But he got the date wrong and the watch went off in the middle of a P.T.A. meeting. I was so embarrassed I've never worn it since.

There is no doubt about it, my husband is generous to a fault. He is also what they call a gadget man. If an object has buttons to push and dials to turn, he'll find a way to make it his own, or, he'll give it to me, knowing full well that I won't use it. Then he can take over.

The real blow came when I left town on two consecutive weekends, surrendering my home and children to my husband's capable hands. On the first occasion, the children were due to attend their school festival. Before I left, I got out the dime store goldfish bowl and the fish food left over from last year. There was a tradition at our house. Each year, at the festival, the children threw ping pong balls into empty goldfish bowls. Every bulls eye meant they got a goldfish. For years it wasn't so bad because they weren't very good shots. We came home with two or three fish which we placed in the bowl on the breakfast room counter. For some reason, they never lasted long. This time I showed my husband the bowl, instructed him not to overfeed the fish, and left town.

To my horor I returned to find a fully equipped aquarium crammed with twenty or so goldfish in place of the simple bowl. "What happened?" I screamed. "The children's aim has improved," my husband grinned. "Ha, I bet you threw the balls for them," I retorted. But there was nothing to do. I switched my traditional place at the table so I could eat with my back to the peering creatures . . . and endured.

On the next weekend, I was only leaving for a day's excursion with some girl friends. It never crossed my mind that my husband would have time to do any significant damage. Besides, it was cold and drizzling outside. They would probably stay home all day and play with my Christmas present - an Atari set.

I returned from this trip dead tired and looking forward to a hot cup of tea. As I entered the kitchen, I noticed a huge, hulking form on the counter where the bread box used to be. It had one red eye and flashed the time in glaring blue lights. I screamed. Then I started to cry. An instruction book as thick

as a dictionary lay on the counter beside the monster. My family entered and the children began to push its buttons gleefully. Then I heard a rasping, simulated voice from the depths of the box say, "select cooking time." The children were ecstatic . . . "Look, Mom, it talks." "Swell," I sobbed and locked myself in the bathroom.

For the next few days the monster and I glared at each other. I had no intention of using it. I tried to ignore its lurking form. Then, one day, I gingerly pressed one of its buttons. "Select defrost time," a husky voice from inside the box commanded. I pressed another button. "Cover food," it demanded. I pushed the voice button from high to squelch. It gave me the creeps to have a box shouting instructions at me. I felt as if "Big Brother" were watching me.

My friend Amy came to visit. "You've got a new microwave. How wonderful!" she exclaimed.

"Oh, that's just for decoration," I replied.

"Nonsense," she scoffed. "Where are your hot dogs?"

Amy didn't have any trouble figuring out how to use the monster. That didn't surprise me. She also knows how to change a flat tire and rewire lamps. She cooked hotdogs in their buns, and I had to admit they were delicious. The buns were spongy and warm and the meat was done to perfection. We each had three more.

"And watch this," Amy giggled, as she pulled a package of broccoli out of the freezer, popped the box into the microwave, and pushed the "frozen food" button. In three minutes it was done, crispy and bright green - no pot to wash. I was incredulous. We went through spinach, asparagus and turnip greens and were starting on okra when I informed Amy that I couldn't eat another bite. "No problem," she amswered; "Leftovers in the microwave are wonderful, good as the first time, often better."

Since that day, I've become a permanent convert to microwave cooking. I turned the oven's voice back on and sometimes, when the house is empty, I play it just for company. When I think of all the pots I washed unnecessarily, not to mention all the stale hotdog buns I've downed, I cringe. And it was all because of a stubborn prejudice against machinery.

This whole experience has made me more broad-minded. I like to think that I have a changed attitude toward the technological wave of the future. Now I'm working on trying to appreciate aquariums. But I haven't left town lately. Who knows, I might return to find one of those mechanical men who vacuums and answers doorbells. On second thought, that might not be so bad either!

Elizabeth Allen

DINING HALL SYNDROME

The cheesecake image of
"Miss American Pie"
gazed back from the mirror
and spit in my eye.

My baby fat days
hung on till my teens
then ran into my twenties
broad as beams.

When I finally realized
(and it wasn't kind)
    That Calvin wouldn't look so Klein
    stretched tight as rubber over
my behind.

The salads I passed up
for chocolate mousse pie
finally caught up
with those hams on rye.

With five pounds added here
and seven gathered 'round there
made more ample room
for my growing derriere.

The seams that split
and zippers which caught
satin that ripped
and size nine was lost.

This body I have
can easily be slim
the battle may be lost
but there's a war to win.

Erin Ryan

Shopping.
Buying.
Spending money.
Secrets.
Hidden presents.
Clandestine wrapping.
An evergreen.
Popcorn and cranberry strands.
Candy canes.
Brightly colored balls.
The Nativity scene.
Mantel garlands.
The Moravian star.
Christmas in Old Salem.
The Candle Tea.
Senior Vespers.
The Christmas Concert.
Angels and Mortals.
Vacation.
Cookies.
Cakes.
Vegetable soup.
Lamb.
Sweet potato souffle.
Cranberry sauce.
Banana Banshees.
Good china.
The Lovefeast.
A crisp, cold morning.
Anticipation.
Family arrivals.
Hugs.
Kisses.
Children in the tree.
Oranges.
Chocolate.
Pine scent.
A fire.
Smoke.
Strewn, bright paper.
Laughter.
Happiness.
Christmas.

Mary Lou Waterstradt

THE CLOTHES BASKET

A tangle of clothes in a confusion of colors,
Piles of cloth,
Smelling of soap and bleach,
Waiting
While the iron bubbles,
Steam hissing from its holes like
Fire from an angry dragon.

That patch of black calico flowers
Watered by tears
When words froze in hate and hurt,
Halting breath
Til my great wheezing gulps
Stabbed the silence.
The smooth black cotton,
Damp and cold.

And that red plaid shirt,
(He chose it himself)
Its buttons a chore
For little boy fingers.
He wore it that morning
My screech shattered the drowsy air.
He had lost his shoes again.
The sleek red fabric
Smelling of milk and oats.

She looked so old,
So grown up
When she wore that ice blue knit
That time she challenged me and
My silence hung on the hostile air.
The nubby blue dress
Wet with little girl sweat.

What torture this maze
Of cottons and wools,
Colors and white,
A knot of memories.
If only the wrinkles of my mind
Were so easy to erase.

Margaret Kelso

Photo By ERIN RYAN

CONTRIBUTOR'S

NOTES

Elizabeth Allen is a special student from Charlotte, North Carolina and is a member of Sigma Upsilon.

Pat Baker is a junior from Charlotte, North Carolina and a member of Sigma Upsilon.

Allison Christian is a senior from Locust Grove, Virginia and a member of Sigma Upsilon.

Lesa Christmas is a junior from Monroe, North Carolina and a member of Sigma Upsilon.

Laura C. Cox is a freshman from May Meadows, Virginia and a member of Sigma Upsilon.

Jennifer Hull is a contributor from Charlotte, North Carolina.

Margaret Kelso is a senior from Charlotte, North Carolina and a member of Sigma Upsilon.

Esther McGarity is a New Dimensions student from Charlotte, North Carolina.

Ann Matthews is a contributor from Charlotte, North Carolina.

Mary Nethercutt is a senior from Greer, South Carolina and a member of Sigma Upsilon.

Neil Ray is a contributor from Charlotte, North Carolina.

Janice Riner is a junior from Charlotte, North Carolina and a member of Sigma Upsilon.

Erin Ryan is a senior from Reston, Virginia and a member of Sigma Upsilon.

Karen Styron is a senior from Sophia, North Carolina and a member of Sigma Upsilon.

Mary Lou Waterstradt is a special student from Charlotte, North Carolina.

Cathi Wilkinson is a senior from Lewisburg, Pennsylvania and a member of Sigma Upsilon.